

Message Text

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ACTION AF-04

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FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1121

C O N F I D E N T U S A L KINSHASA 0024

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF, PINS, AO, CG

SUBJECT: CABINDAN REFUGEES IN ZAIRE

REF: A) STATE 303139 B) KINSHASA 10536

1. SUMMARY: REPORTS FROM SEVERAL DIFFERENT SOURCES INDICATE THAT THE CABINDAN REFUGEES IN BAS ZAIRE ARE IN DESPERATE CONDITION, SUFFERING FROM A SERIOUS LACK OF FOOD, MEDICINE, AND CLOTHING. IN ADDITION, REFUGEES WHO HAD SETTLED IN ZAIRIAN VILLAGES ALONG THE BORDER ARE BEING MOVED TO OTHER LOCATIONS, SO THAT ZAIRIAN CITIZENS WILL NOT BE FURTHER MOLESTED DURING FAPLA/CUBAN INCURSIONS AGAINST CABINDAN REFUGEES. THE LAST SUCH INCURSION REPORTEDLY OCCURRED ON NOVEMBER 18 AND RESULTED IN THE DEATH OF OVER 100 REFUGEES AND ZAIRIANS. END SUMMARY.

2. PLIGHT OF REFUGEES.

LOUIS A. WEISNER AND NICHOLAS ERJAVEC OF THE INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE RECENTLY COMPLETED AN EXPLORATORY TRIP THROUGH LOWER BAS ZAIRE TO STUDY THE REFUGEE SITUATION. THEIR TRIP WAS COORDINATED WITH THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN ZAIRE. UPON RETURN, THEY SHARED SOME OF THEIR FINDINGS WITH US, CONFIRMING OUR PREVIOUS REPORT IN CONFIDENTIAL

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REFTEL B. THEY ESTIMATED THAT PERHAPS AS MANY AS 50,000 CABINDAN REFUGEES ARE IN BAS ZAIRE, THOUGH THEY STRESSED THE TENTATIVE NATURE OF SUCH AN ESTIMATE. THEY WERE SHOCKED BY THE CONDITION OF THE REFUGEES, WHO LACKED FOOD, MEDICINE AND CLOTHING. MANY OF THE REFUGEES SUFFERED FROM MALNUTRITION, SCABIES AND EYE INFECTION.

3. ACCORDING TO MR. WEISNER AND OTHER UNRELATED SOURCES, SOME OF

THE REFUGEE COMMUNITIES ALONG THE BORDER ON THE ZAIRIAN SIDE HAVE BEEN SUBJECTED TO RAIDS BY FAPLA/CUBAN TROOPS. ZAIRIAN AUTHORITIES, CONCERNED FOR THE WELFARE OF ZAIRIAN CITIZENS, HAVE SEPARATED REFUGEES FROM CITIZENS TO PREVENT FURTHER DESTRUCTION OF ZAIRIAN LIFE AND PROPERTY IN THE EVENT OF RENEWED FAPLA/CUBAN RAIDS ON REFUGEES.

4. RELIEF EFFORTS.

CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT CHURCHES ARE PROVIDING SOME LIMITED ASSISTANCE TO CABINDAN REFUGEES IN ZAIRE, BUT TO DATE, THERE HAS BEEN NO MAJOR ORGANIZED RELIEF EFFORT. AS NOTED IN REFTEL B, EXCEPT FOR A SMALL REFUGEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM IN MOANDA, THE UNHCR HAS CHOSEN TO STAY OUT OF AREAS ADJACENT TO CABINDA. THE IRC CERTAINLY NOW POSSESSES THE BEST DATA ON REFUGEE NEEDS, BUT WE DO NOT YET KNOW WHETHER THAT ORGANIZATION WILL LAUNCH A RELIEF EFFORT.

5. COMMENT: EMBASSY WAS FORTHCOMING IN ITS COMMENTS WITH WIESNER. IN EXPLAINING INACTIVITY OF UNHCR ALONG CABINDAN BORDER, EMBASSY NOTED UNHCR REPRESENTATIVE NOEL'S PREFERENCE FOR MPLA. WE ASSUME THIS INFORMATION WAS PASSED ON TO IRC AND WOULD HOPE THAT IRC WILL TREAT IT WITH DISCRETION.

6. MR. WEISNER ALSO OBSERVED THAT THE EMBASSY AND AID HAVE NOT BEEN ACTIVE IN THE CABINDAN BORDER AREA. AS THE DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, THIS IS THE RESULT OF A DECISION IN SPRING 1976 TO CHANNEL US ASSISTANCE FOR REFUGEES IN ZAIRE THROUGH UNHCR.

7. SUGGEST THAT DEPARTMENT ASK IRC FOR FULL REPORT.

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Message Attributes

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